THE ORTHODOX WORD

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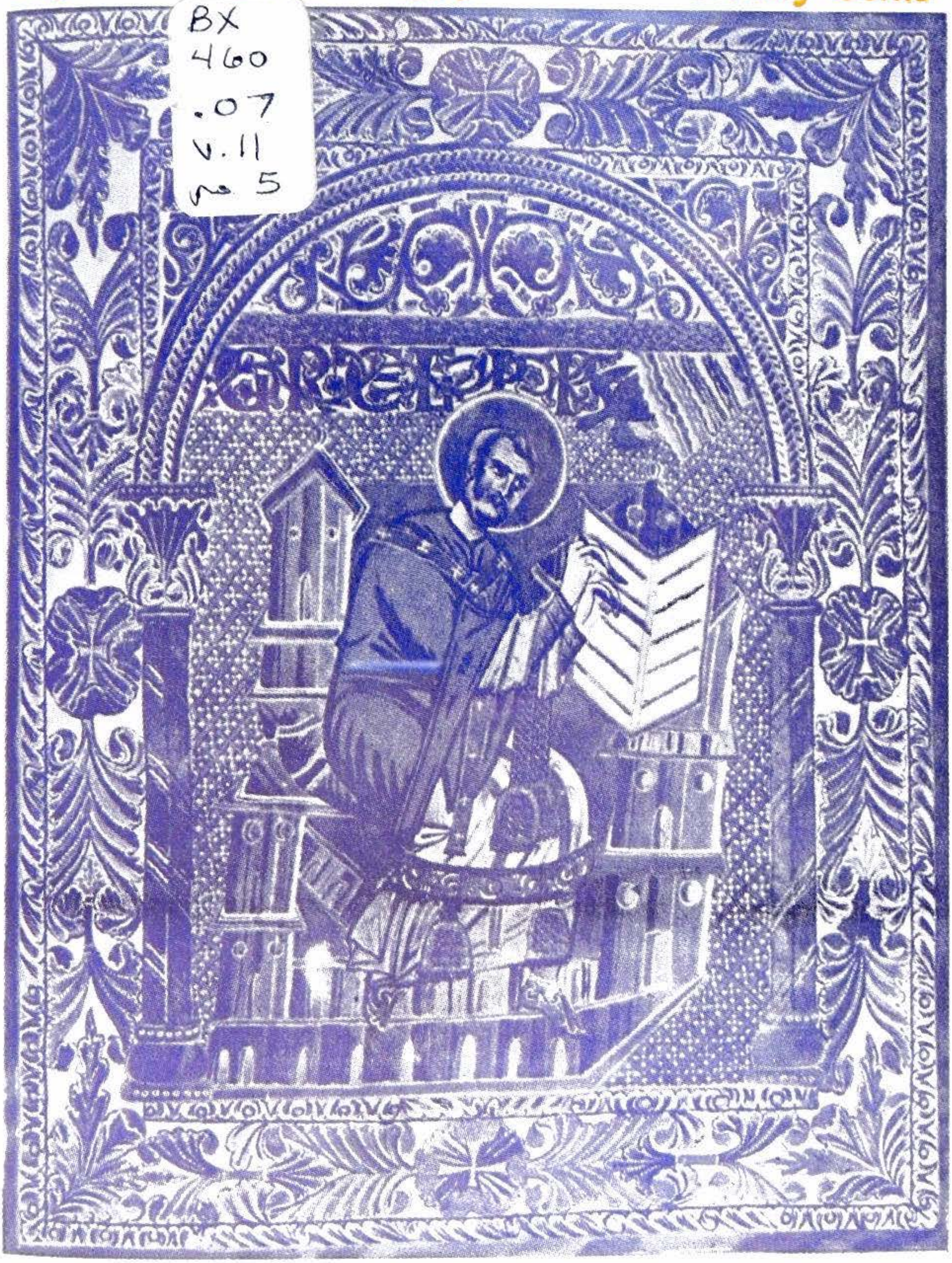

THE ORTHODOX WORD

A Bimonthly Periodical

OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF
SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA

Established with the blessing of His Eminence the late *John* (*Maximovitch*), Archbishop of Western America and San Francisco, Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

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St. Gregory the Dialogist

A PROLOGUE of the Orthodox Saints of the West

Only if the sky can forego its stars, earth its grass, honeycombs their honey, streams their water, and breasts their milk will our tongues be able to renounce their praise of the saints, in whom God is the strength of life and the fame of death.
St. Paulinus of Nola, *Poem* 19 (405 A.D.)

Today we can clearly see that St. Herman came to America not merely to bring Holy Orthodoxy to the pagan Alaskan natives, but also to awaken the sense of the genuine Orthodox roots which lie deep underneath the fallen-away Christianity of the West, which is the spiritual background of America today. Even in our frightful times, when the foundations of any kind of decent life are collapsing, a chosen few are finding their way back to the Orthodoxy which, in the dim mists of history, was the patrimony of their own ancestors. Thus, this Prologue is devoted to the Orthodox patrimony of the sons of Western lands — to the Orthodox saints of the West, whose proper Orthodox veneration was so much desired by the great 20th-century apostle to the West, Archbishop John Maximovitch.

THE LIFE OF
THE FATHERS

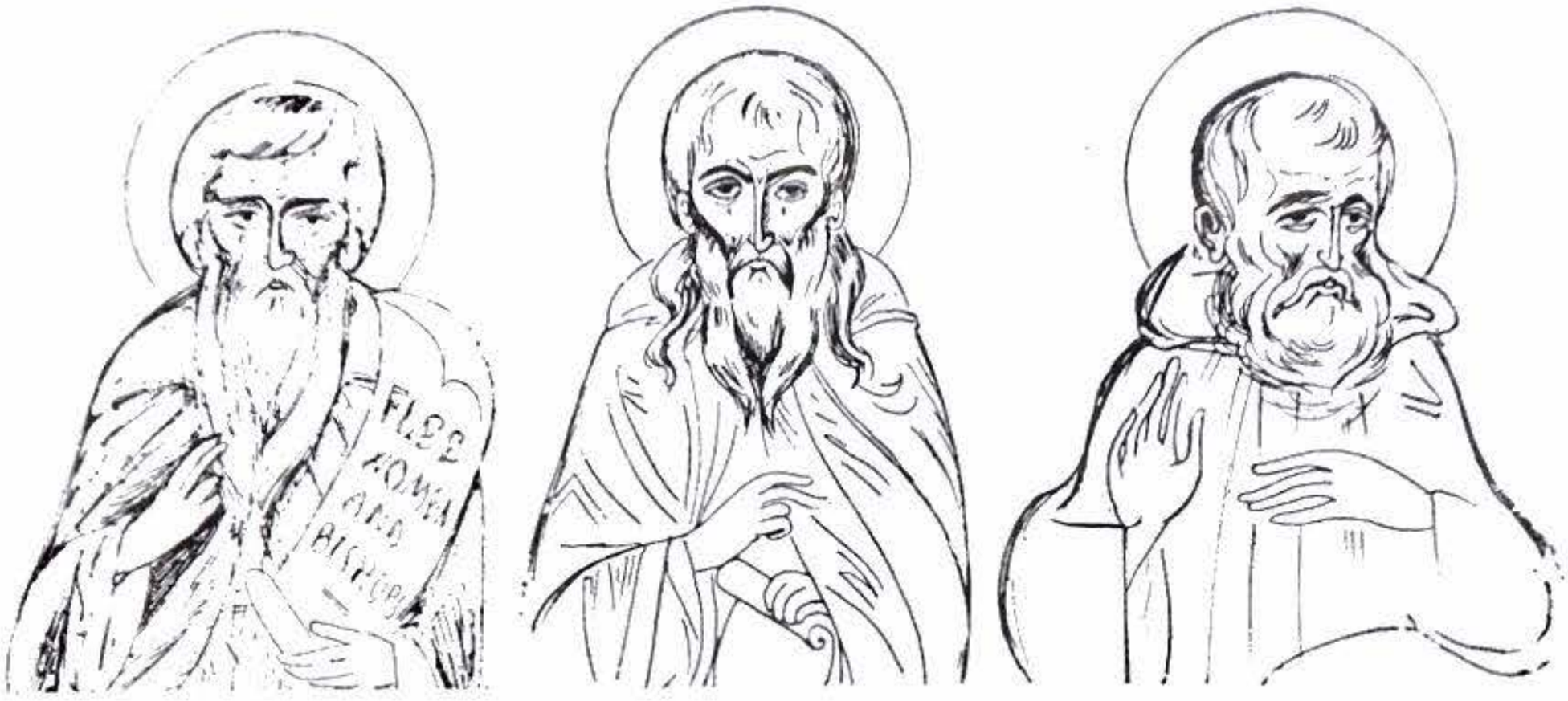
Introduction

St. Patrick of Ireland

A PROLOGUE of the

A TOUCHSTONE of true Orthodoxy is the love for Christ's saints. From the earliest Christian centuries the Church has celebrated her saints—first the Apostles and martyrs who died for Christ, then the desert-dwellers who crucified themselves for the love of Christ, and the hierarchs and shepherds who gave their lives for the salvation of their flocks.

From the beginning the Church has treasured the written Lives of these her saints and has celebrated their memory in her Divine services. These two sources — the Lives and services — are extremely important to us today for the preservation of the authentic Orthodox tradition of faith and piety. The false "enlightenment" of our modern age is so all-pervasive that it draws many Orthodox Christians into its puffed-up "wisdom," and without their even knowing it they are taken away from the true spirit of Orthodoxy and left only with the shell of Orthodox rites, formulas, and customs. Almost all Orthodox seminaries today (with the notable exception of Holy Trinity Seminary at Jordanville, New York) are centers for the propagation of modernism in the Church, and even when they cry "back to tradition" or "patristic revival," this is seldom more than another academic fashion, usually taking its inspiration from Roman Catholic scholarship, and leading not at all back to a truly Orthodox *spirit*, but



Great Monastic Leaders: Sts. Cassian, Martin, and Benedict

Orthodox Saints of the West

only to yet more empty forms. To have a seminary education, even to have the "right views" about Orthodox history and theology — is not enough. A typical modern "Orthodox" education produces, more often than not, merely Orthodox rationalists capable of debating intellectual positions with Catholic and Protestant rationalists, but *lacking the true spirit and feeling of Orthodoxy.* This spirit and feeling are communicated most effectively in the Lives of saints and in similar sources which speak less of the outward side of correct dogma and rite than of the essential inward side of proper Orthodox attitude, spirit, piety. Very many of these basic Orthodox sources, already translated into English, are lying unused by Orthodox Christians because a proper Orthodox approach or introduction to them has not been given. Let us attempt here to make this approach, particularly with regard to the Orthodox saints of the West who are as yet so little known to Orthodox Christians in America, even though a number of them have been revered for centuries in the East. May this our effort be a fitting "prologue" (we shall see in a moment what this word means in Orthodox literature) to a whole treasure-chest of Orthodox texts! May it help us all to put off our vain modern "wisdom" and enter more deeply into the spirit of Orthodox antiquity and its literature.

St. Ambrose of Milan

St. Irenæus of Lyons

St. Germanus of Auxerre

THE EARLIEST Lives of saints were the Acts of the Martyrs, followed in the 4th century, when the Egyptian desert began to blossom with monks, by the Lives of ascetics, the first of this form being the Life of St. Anthony the Great by St. Athanasius of Alexandria. Later, collections of such Lives were made, and they have been handed down to the present day in such works as the *Lives* of St. Demetrius of Rostov (†1709) in Slavonic and Russian, and the *Synaxaria* of St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (†1809) in Greek. A person with a modern education must be taught how to approach these works, just as a person who has been trained in classical Western painting must be re-educated in order to understand the quite different art of the icon. Hagiography, like iconography, is a sacred art and has its own laws which are quite different from those of secular art. The Life of a saint is not a mere history of him, but rather a selection of the events in his life which reveal how God has been glorified in him; and its style is devout, and often exalted and reverential, in order to give a proper spiritual tone and feeling to the narration and arouse in the reader both faith and piety. This is why a mere retelling of a saint's life can never take the place of the original hagiographical account. A "Life" thus differs from a "biography" much as an icon differs from a naturalistic portrait.

Apart from actual Lives of saints, there is a second kind of hagiographical literature in the Orthodox Church. This is the material which has come down to us in the Orthodox *Prologues,* which include both brief Lives and edifying incidents from the lives of holy men as well as ordinary sinners. The name "Prologue" was given to collections of hagiographical literature as early

as the 11th century in Byzantium; soon they appeared in Slavonic also and became greatly beloved by the Orthodox Russian people.

The *Prologue* is actually one of the *liturgical* books of the Orthodox Church. It is appointed to be read (not chanted, like the Psalms) after the Sixth Canticle of the Canon at Matins (in the Russian Church; in the Greek Church the *Synaxaria* are read here). The solemn and didactic prose of this book, giving first of all brief Lives of the saints of the day, does indeed serve as a "prologue" to the liturgical celebration of these saints in the Church's exalted poetry, much as the Acts of the Martyrs preceded the liturgical celebration of the martyrs in ancient times; this seems to account for the origin of its name. Yet it is of quite secondary importance whether the *Prologue* be read strictly "according to the Typicon" at its appointed place in the Divine services. The spirit of the Church is freedom, and various adaptations of ancient practice are possible, if only these serve for the edification and piety of the faithful. The *Prologue* (just like the Lives of saints) could be read at family morning or evening prayers, at mealtimes, on long winter evenings — a time now lamentably usurped even in most Orthodox homes by television, which inculcates its own crude, worldly tone and feeling. The book read need not be the *Prologue* (which does not exist in English, in any case), but another book of similar inspiration may be used. Let us here only look briefly at the *Prologue* itself in order to discover something of its spirit — so important for us who live in the soul-less, spirit-less 20th century — before passing on to a discussion of books of similar inspiration in the West.

In the Slavonic *Prologue* printed at the St. Petersburg Synodal Press in 1896 (two large folio volumes of some 800 pages each — enough in itself to give us a glimpse of what our poor American Orthodoxy lacks!), under the date June 27 (chosen at random) we find the following:

First, "the commemoration of our holy Father Sampson the Hospitable," which gives a brief outline of the good deeds of this Saint (less than half a page). On most days there are several other similarly brief Lives, but on this day there is only the one Life, followed by a number of different edifying incidents. The first incident is a "Homily on Martin the Monk who was in Turov at the church of the holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb, living alone in God." This is an account of how Sts. Boris and Gleb appeared to one holy Russian monk in his illness and gave him to drink and healed him (half a page). This is followed by a little longer incident from the *Dialogues* of *St.* Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, concerning the Presbyter Severus, who delayed in visiting a dying man and found him dead on his arrival, but by his prayers brought

him back to life for seven days in order that he might repent of his sins. Similar incidents are taken in other parts of the *Prologue* from such books as the *Lausiac History* of Palladius (5th century), the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus (6th century), and the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. The final entry for June 27 is a brief Homily "That it is good to visit the sick," concluding with the Scriptural words of Christ: "For I was sick, and ye visited me," and the standard conclusion of every day's readings: "To Him may there be glory, now and ever and unto the ages of ages."

It may readily be seen how foreign such readings are to the spirit and taste of our times. These are what might be called by some modern scholar "pious tales" or "miracle stories"; he would disdain them not only for their miracles, but just as much for their "moralizing." But it is just here that the searcher for the true spirit of Orthodoxy must question the "objective" scholar. Why is it that Orthodox Christians for nearly two millenia have found spiritual instruction and nourishment in such stories, and only quite recently, under the strong influence of modern Western "enlightenment," have our sophisticated Orthodox seminary graduates begun to disdain them? Is it because they are not true? — We shall see below that this is not the case at all. Is it because our Orthodox ancestors were really naive children who needed such tales, but we ourselves, being more sophisticated and mature, can do without them? — But then where do we derive our Orthodox nourishment outside of the few hours a week spent in church and church schools — from television?! Or could it be that our Orthodox ancestors had something which we lack, and which we desperately need in order to remain truly Orthodox and hand down the unchanging Orthodox faith and piety to our own offspring? Could it be that our ancestors understood something that many of us have lost through acquiring the habit of false, worldly knowledge? Perhaps, indeed, we may find in these miracles and morals that so insult the "modern mind" a missing dimension of the contemporary outlook, which in its elusive search for a two-dimensional "objectivity" has lost the key to much more of true wisdom than it thinks to have gained. "Scientific objectivity" has come today virtually to a dead-end, and every kind of truth has come into question. But this dead-end for worldly knowledge is perhaps the opening of a way to a higher knowledge, wherein truth and life are no longer divorced, where advance in true knowedge is impossible without a corresponding advance in moral and spiritual life. Involuntarily, the converts to Orthodoxy form Western lands — and the Westernized "native Orthodox" as well — have been transported back to that earlier time

when the proud rationalism of pagan Rome was conquered by the true wisdom of Christianity. Let us therefore turn back to that earlier time in order to find something of the freshness and power of Orthodoxy as it conquered the Western mind. There we shall find also, to our great good fortune, materials for a Western "Prologue" (many of them already in English) not at all inferior to that of the East, as well as keys for understanding it and entering into its spirit.

Sts. Columbanus of Luxueil, Paulinus of Nola, and Clotilde the Queen

THE LANDS OF THE WEST, from Italy to Britain, knew both the preaching of the Apostles and the deeds of martyrs; here the Christian seed was planted so firmly that the West responded immediately and enthusiastically when it first heard of the great ascetics of Egypt and the East. St. Athanasius' *Life* of St. Anthony the Great was quickly translated into Latin, and the best sons and daughters of the West went to the East to learn from the great Fathers there. Many, including Blessed Jerome and the noble Roman ladies Paula and Melania, ended their days in the Holy Land; others, such as the Presbyter Rufinus, went on pilgrimage and brought back such valuable texts as the *History of the Monks of Egypt;* one — St. John Cassian the Roman — learned so thoroughly the spiritual doctrine of the Egyptian Fathers that his books (the *Institutes* and *Conferences*) became the chief foundation of the authentic monastic tradition of the West. The great seedbed of Orthodox monasticism in 5th-century Gaul — Lerins — grew up entirely under the influence of the Eastern monastic tradition.

And then, even as the news of the phenomenon of Egyptian monasticism was still spreading through the West, the West produced its own ascetic miracle: St. Martin of Tours. Even before his death in 397, his manuscript *Life*

was being circulated in Gaul, Spain, Italy, and elsewhere in the West, revealing him as a monastic Father and wonderworker in no way inferior to the desert Fathers in the East. From that time on the West had ascetic examples of its own to inspire its offspring, as well as able writers of their Lives, which to this day remain a chief primary source of the genuine Orthodoxy of the West. Among many others from the 5th to the 8th centuries, one may mention: in Gaul, the Eulogy of St. Honoratus, founder of Lerins, by St. Hilary, his successor as Bishop of Arles, and the Life of St. Germanus of Auxerre by Constantius of Lyons; in Italy, the Life of St. Benedict by St. Gregory the Great (Book II of the *Dialogues*), and the shorter Lives and incidents from the Lives of the Italian Fathers in the same work; in England, the Life of St. Cuthbert by Venerable Bede, and the Life of the great anchorite of the moors, St. Guthlac, by the Monk Felix; in Ireland, the Life of St. Columba by the Monk Adamnan.*

Here let us look more closely at three Western hagiographers of the 5th and 6th centuries. Their spirit is unquestionably and powerfully Orthodox.

1. SULPICIUS SEVERUS: THE *DIALOGUES* AND *LIFE OF ST. MARTIN*

Sulpicius Severus (363-420) is an excellent example of the proud Roman mind conquered by Christianity. Well educated, a successful lawyer, happily married, a writer of Latin prose (as even the critical historian Gibbon notes) in "a style not unworthy of the Augustan age" — he possessed all the characteristics needful for prosperity and success in the decadent Roman world at the turn of the 5th century. And yet, not only was he converted to the still-new religion of Christianity, he even abandoned the world and became the disciple of a wonderworking bishop and the writer of a Life of him that astonished the West by its miracles. Modern scholars, whether agnostic or "Christian," find him to be "one of the puzzles of history," because "no biographer of his period was better qualified to write a truthful life of a contemporary saint and no biographer of his period — we may almost say, of any period — has written a life more full of astounding prodigies." (F. R. Hoare, *The Western Fathers*, p. 4.)

§ Easily accessible collections of such original Lives in English include: *The Western Fathers* (chiefly of Gaul), ed. by F. R. Hoare, Harper Torchbooks, 1965; *Lives of the Saints* (of England), tr. by J. F. Webb, Penguin Books, 1970; *Anglo-Saxon Saints and Heroes*, tr. by Clinton Albertson, Fordham University Press, 1967; *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany*, tr. by C. H. Talbot, Sheed & Ward, N.Y., 1954.

This "puzzle" remains unsolved for modern scholars; but how simple the answer to it is for someone unprejudiced by modern opinions of what is "possible" or "impossible." Sulpicius, both by his own experience and by the words of eyewitnesses he knew and trusted — discovered that *the miracles of St. Martin were true,* and he wrote of these "astounding prodigies" *only because they were true.* Sulpicius himself writes in the conclusion to his *Life*: "I am clear in my own conscience that my motives for writing were the certainty of the facts and the love of Christ, and that I have only related what is well known, only said what is true."

We who, even in these decadent latter times, have known Archbishop John Maximovitch (†1966), a wonderworker very similar in many respects to St. Martin, have no difficulty in believing the words of Sulpicius; they ring true to our own Orthodox Christian experience. It is only those who do not know the power of Orthodoxy in practice who find the *Life of St. Martin* a "puzzle." It is quite natural, in the Christian understanding, for the virtue of a man entirely dedicated to God and living already on earth an Angelic life, to result in manifestations which astound mere earthly logic,whether these be revelations of other-worldly humility and meekness, or outright miracles. The very word *virtus* in Latin signifies both "virtue" and "power," which in the Lives of saints is often "miraculous power," often translated simply "miracles."

The Orthodox tradition is by no means credulous in its acceptance of the miracles of saints. Great care is always taken to assure that the Lives of saints contain true accounts and not fables; for it is indeed true that, in the age of "romance" that began in the Western Middle Ages just after Rome's final separation from the Church of Christ (1054), such fables *were* introduced into many Lives of saints, rendering all later Latin sources especially suspect. Orthodox hagiographers, on the other hand, have always taken as their principle the maxim that St. Demetrius of Rostov placed on the first page of his *Lives*: MAY I TELL NO LIE ABOUT A SAINT. This is also why, in the Orthodox Church, great care is taken to transmit the *original sources* that tell of the saints: those Lives which are based on the author's immediate experience and the testimony of witnesses known to him personally. Thus the freshness and marvel of one who personally knew the saint is preserved, and there is transmitted to us directly, "between the lines" as it were, the authentic "tone" of a holy life.

(*Continued on page* 204)

THE LIFE OF

Saint Dalmatus of Siberia

AND THE MONASTIC EXODUS INTO THE SIBERIAN TAIGA*

Commemorated February 15

SAINT DALMATUS was born in the first quarter of the 17th century in a cossack family. His father was Ivan Makrinsky and his mother was a descendent of newly baptized Siberian Tatars, evidently of noble lineage. Thus, the Saint was a native Siberian, probably from the town of Tobolsk, which at that time was the cultural and strategic center for the whole of vast Siberia. In holy Baptism the young Makrinsky was given the name Demetrius in honor of the Vologda ascetic, St. Demetrius of Priluki,the disciple of St. Sergius of Radonezh and an outstanding representative of the Northern Thebaid.† This already left a certain mystical stamp on the boy's spiritual formation, for later he was to be in so many ways similar to his heavenly patron. Later, when living alone as a hermit in a cave in the taiga, often he would bring to mind the image of St. Demetrius and draw from it strength in the severe trials and temptations which inevitably come upon desert dwellers. And St. Demetrius, seeing his struggles and hearing his tearful prayer and lamentation, interceded before the Throne of God on behalf of the young bearer of his name and follower of his spiritual path.

BY THE MIDDLE of the 17th century the movement of ascetics to the isolated places of the Northern Thebaid had largely spent itself. Hundreds of monasteries had been established, and the desert had become populated with many thousands of monks. But the new historical conditions were not so favor-

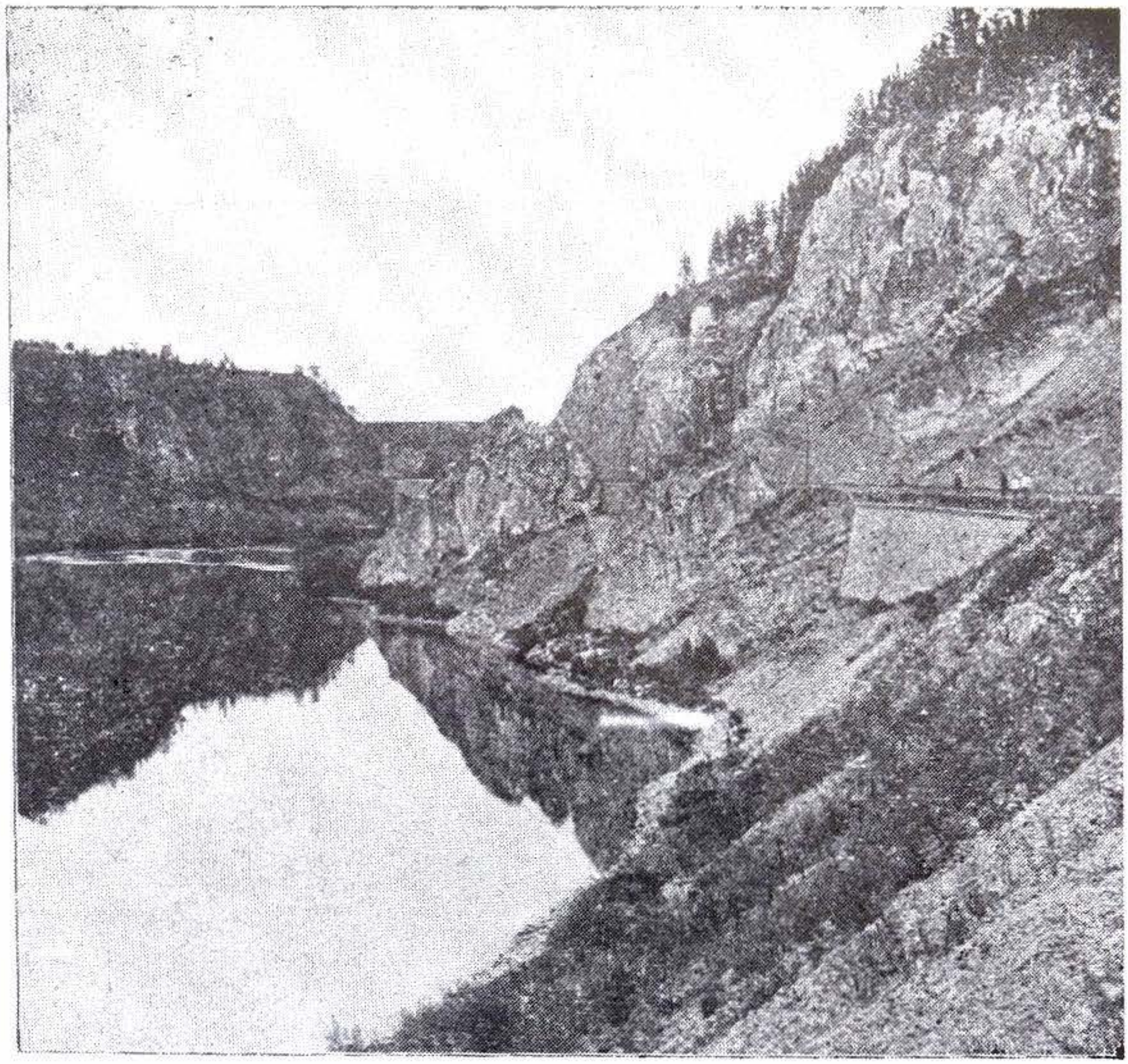
* Sources: The weekly periodical *Russian Pilgrim,* 1894 and 1896; *The Earthly* Life of the Most Holy Mother of God and Her Miraculous Icons, by E. Poselyanin, 1902; the biweekly periodical of Pochaev Monastery, *Russian Monk.* 1911, no. 12, p. 73; *Orthodox Way* for 1968, Jordanville, N.Y,. p. 118; the monthly periodical *Strannik,* 1866, IV; *Historical Description of Kirensk Monastery,* Moscow, 1841; *Russian Ascetics of the* 18*th and* 19*th Centuries,* by Bp. Nikodim of Belgorod, vol., 13, Moscow, 1912 (all in Russian).

† Commemorated Feb. 11, †1392.

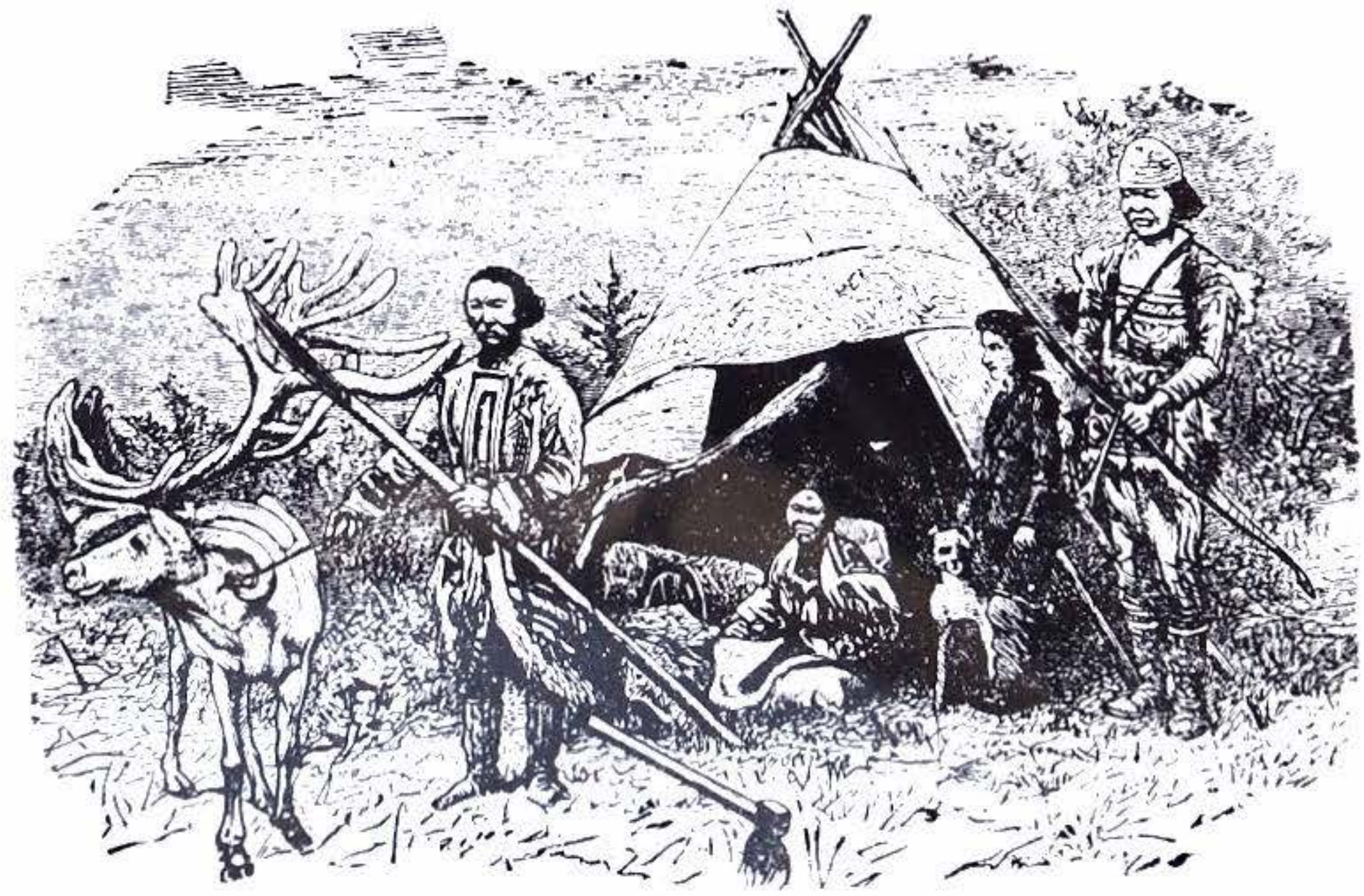
ST. DALMATUS OF SIBERIA

KONTAKION, TONE 8

Having been a valiant warrior for an earthly king,* thou didst abandon everything for the service of the King of Heaven.* Leading an army of warriors against enemies visible and invisible,* with the sword of the Spirit and the aid of the Queen of Heaven thou didst repel their assaults.* Now in the heavens, do not cease to entreat Christ, O holy Father Dalmatus,* that we who venerate thy memory may obtain great mercy and cry out in gratitude to God: Alleluia.



A river in the Ural Mountains



Siberian natives: a Tunguse family in their birch-bark tent

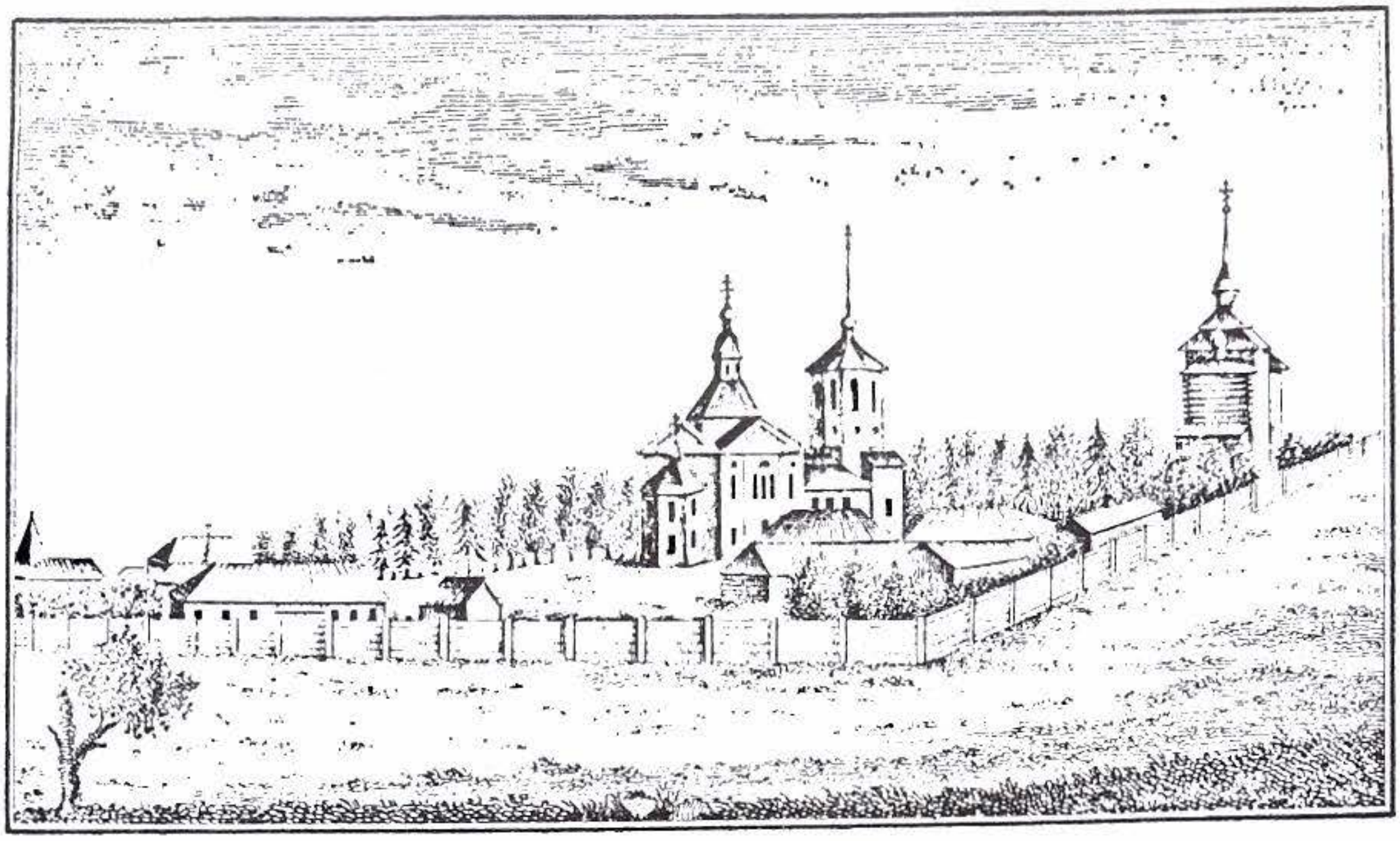
able for the monastic spirit, and the Time of Troubles had brought desolation to many monasteries. Yet the thirst for the desert life of solitude not only could not be quenched, but was even increasing. And so, lovers of the desert life found a new place for their solitary labors in the sparsely settled area beyond the Ural Mountains, where wild pagan and Moslem tribes still roamed. This boundless area, like a new world opening before the lovers of silence and wilderness — was Siberia. It provided new wide spaces of freedom for monastic endeavor, especially in its dense, impenetrable northern jungle: the taiga.

The taiga is the dense virgin forest which then covered most of the North. It indeed offered opportunities to extend the frontier of the Northern Thebaid, and many holy men adorned it with their sanctity. Thus the monastic exodus, the perennial Christian flight to the desert, occurred eastward across the Urals by way of Great Ustiug, Vyatka, Perm, along the great Kama River— and soon the whole of this region north to the Arctic Sea was caught up in the fervor of bringing the Orthodox Faith and monasticism to the wild peoples of this new land. This may be clearly seen in the life and labors of *St. Tryphon of Vyatka,* who travelled through this vast territory disseminating the monastic ideal through his personal sanctity, building churches and monastic communities on his way.* As early as 1593 monks of Kozha Lake Monastery, *Cornelius, Longinus, Herman and Bogolep,* founded a New Kozha monastery on the Enisei River in Mangazea, where in 1664 *Abbess Stephanida* founded a convent.

ST.TIKHON OF ENISEY

St. Tikhon was born in Ustiug in a priestly family and migrated to a frontier town on the Enesei River in his adult years. There he entered the New Kozha Monastery and led an ascetic life, with the hope of going away entirely into the wilderness. With the Abbot's blessing, he set out in a small boat with the monk Dionysius, up the river Enesei. At Turukhan they spent the winter, and the next spring (1657) they went 20 miles further up the Enesei, where they found a beautiful uninhabited place in the midst of an impenetrable forest. There they erected a cross and then built cells and began to live a God-pleasing life. With their hands they labored, and with their lips they ceaselessly glorified God in prayer. Soon others began to join them, notable elders among them being Mercurius, Gerasim, Paul and Nikon. With God's help and the blessing of Archbishop Simeon of Tobolsk, they erected a wooden church dedicated to the Holy Trinity, and the brothers compelled St. Tikhon to accept the

* †1612, October 8.

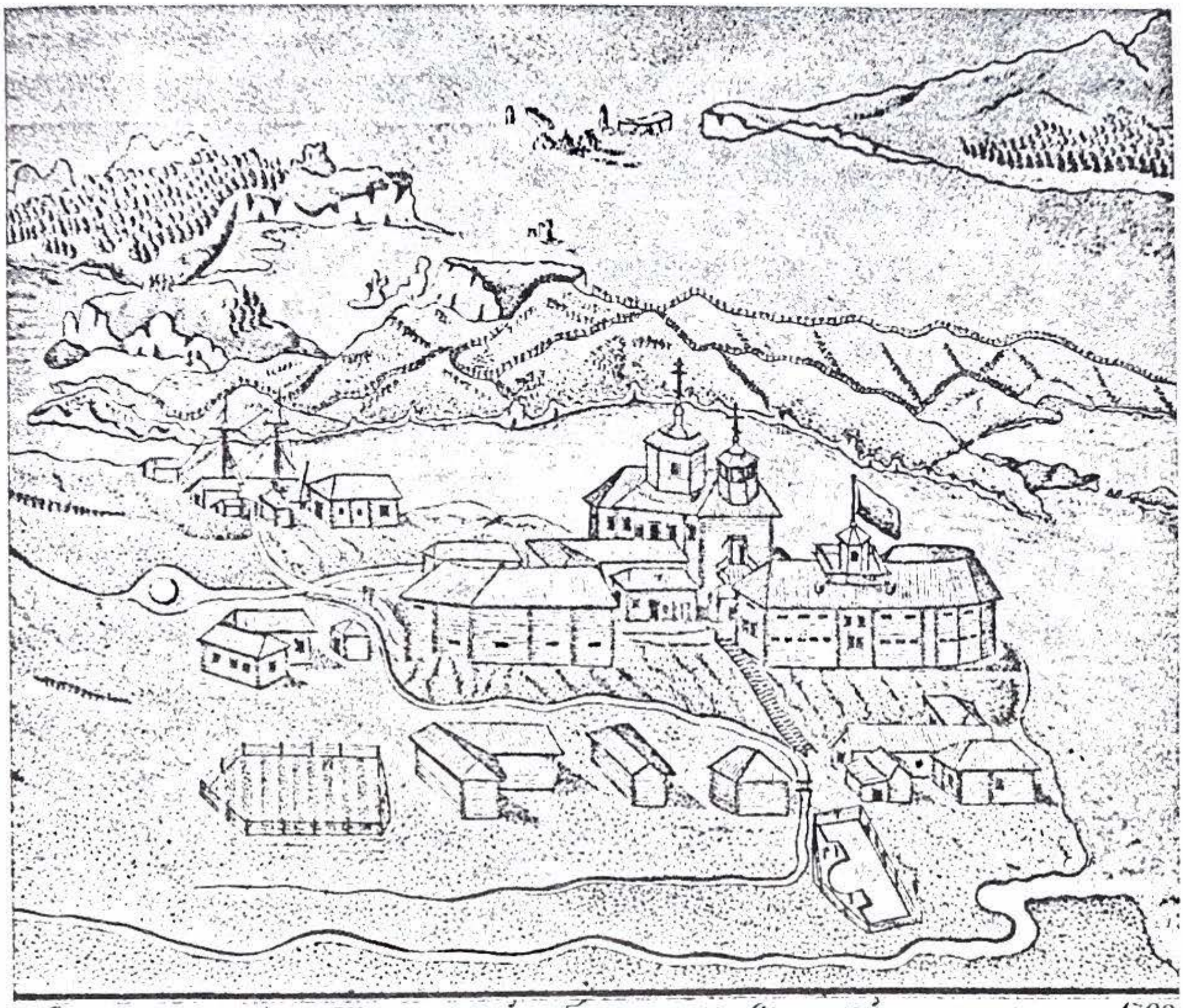


St. Hermogenes' Kirensk Monastery (18th century engraving)

priestly rank. As abbot, he gave the chief example of ascetic life and meekness. Before celebrating Liturgy he would spend the night in prayer, and during Great Lent he would eat only bread and water on Saturdays and Sundays. He wore iron chains, and heavy iron crosses on his chest and back. The hesychast nature of his sanctity made him worthy to be God's vehicle in revealing the relics of the Blessed Child Basil of Mangazea, which he transferred to his monastery on skis, pulling a sled. On July 24, 1682, he reposed, later appearing gloriously from Paradise and giving healings at his grave.

ST. HERMOGENES OF LENA

St. Hermogenes also was a newcomer to Siberia, bringing the light of Christianity to the natives along the Lena River. He began also in search of a desolate place on the shores of this great, silent river. Having lived as a recluse he gathered around himself some brethren, who appealed to the church and secular authorities for permission to build a church and have it consecrated. Already in 1665 a second church adorned this Kirensk Monastery, surrounded by the monks' cells. As a result of local strife, however, the Saint did not even see this church built before a band of "pioneers" took him as a hostage, fleeing with him to the shores of the Amur River, where in 1671 they established the



Видъ строенія Павловской Гавани, съ Сѣверной стороны 1798

THE FARTHERMOST OUTPOST OF THE SIBERIAN MISSION AND FIRST ORTHODOX MISSION IN AMERICA

Resurrection Church at St. Paul Harbor on Kodiak Island in Alaska

A topographical drawing made in 1798, *showing the original buildings of the harbor as seen from the north side*

Fort of Albazin. There the Saint erected two monasteries up the Kutar River and for twenty years he labored with apostolic zeal. In 1685 the Chinese destroyed Fort Albazin and its inhabitants were released, which gave the Saint the opportunity to return to his beloved Kirensk Monastery. Having returned, the Saint died on December 19, 1690, and was buried there. A reliquary was soon built over his grave, where many miracles took place.

The Tobolsk Archbishop Gerasim (†1650) was the hierarch during whose rule many monasteries were officially founded in Siberia; he was a wise and very active archpastor. In connection with him there is an interesting mention of a group of enterprising Novgorodians who reached the Aleutian Islands at about this time and settled in America, keeping alive and spreading their Orthodox faith and customs. Later St. Herman of Alaska (†1836) mentioned them in a letter to Abbot Nazarius of Valaam. The farthermost outpost of this Siberian missionary fervor, the Mission to America of 1794, was composed exclusively of monks, who thus brought to the American continent, most strikingly in the person of St. Herman, the spirit of the Northern Thebaid, together with the great text of the monastic spiritual struggle—the *Philokalia.*

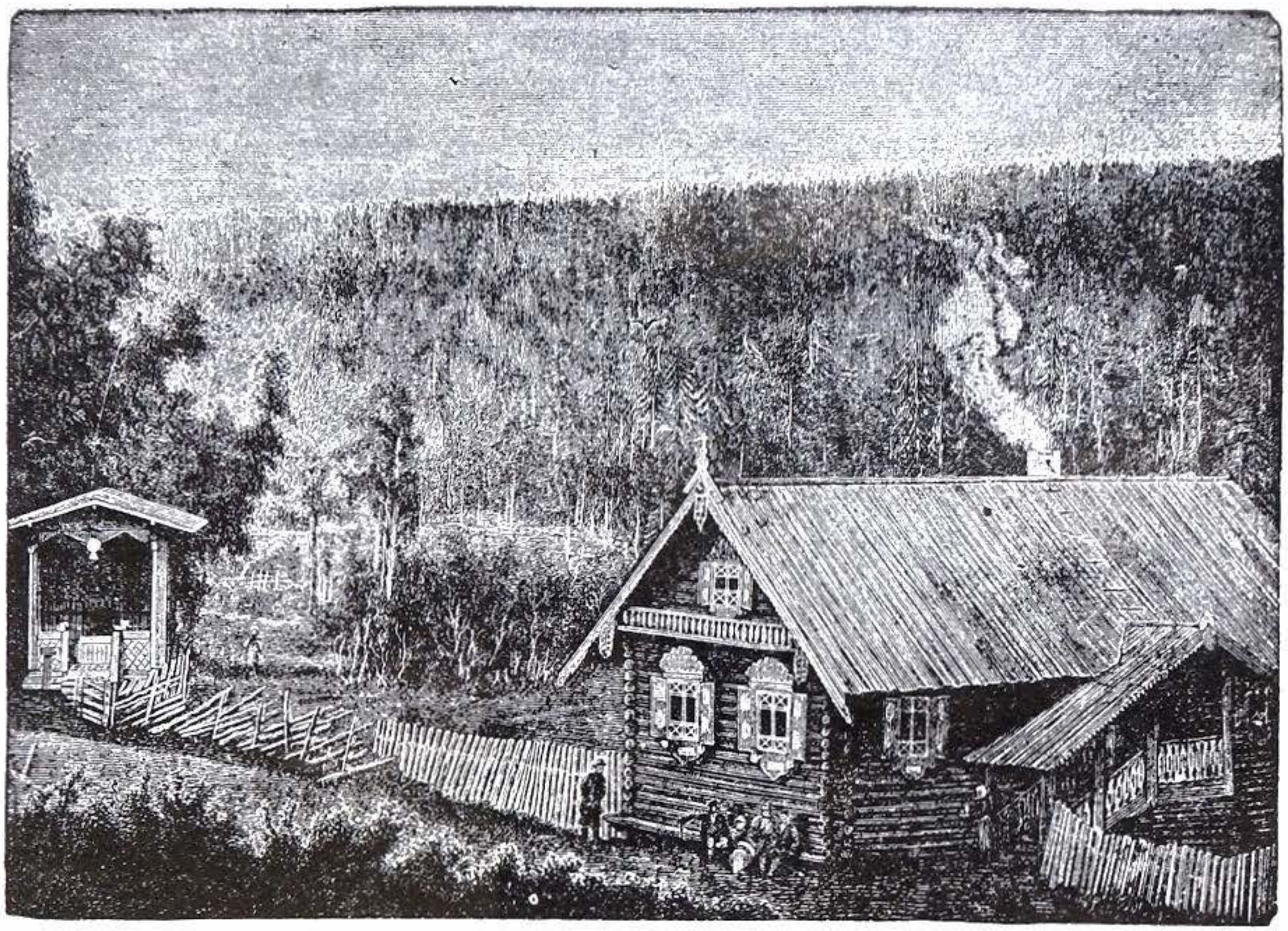
It is impossible even to mention all the great monastic figures of 17th- and 18th-century Siberia; but one cannot omit from this brief list at least the monastic founders beyond Lake Baikal: *Elder Gerasim the Wonderworker*, who founded the Ascension Monastery in Irkutsk, *Hieromonk Macarius*, who founded Holy Transfiguration Monastery in 1681, and *Abbot Theodosius*, founder of Holy Trinity Monastery in 1682.

ST. DALMATUS, OR DALMAT

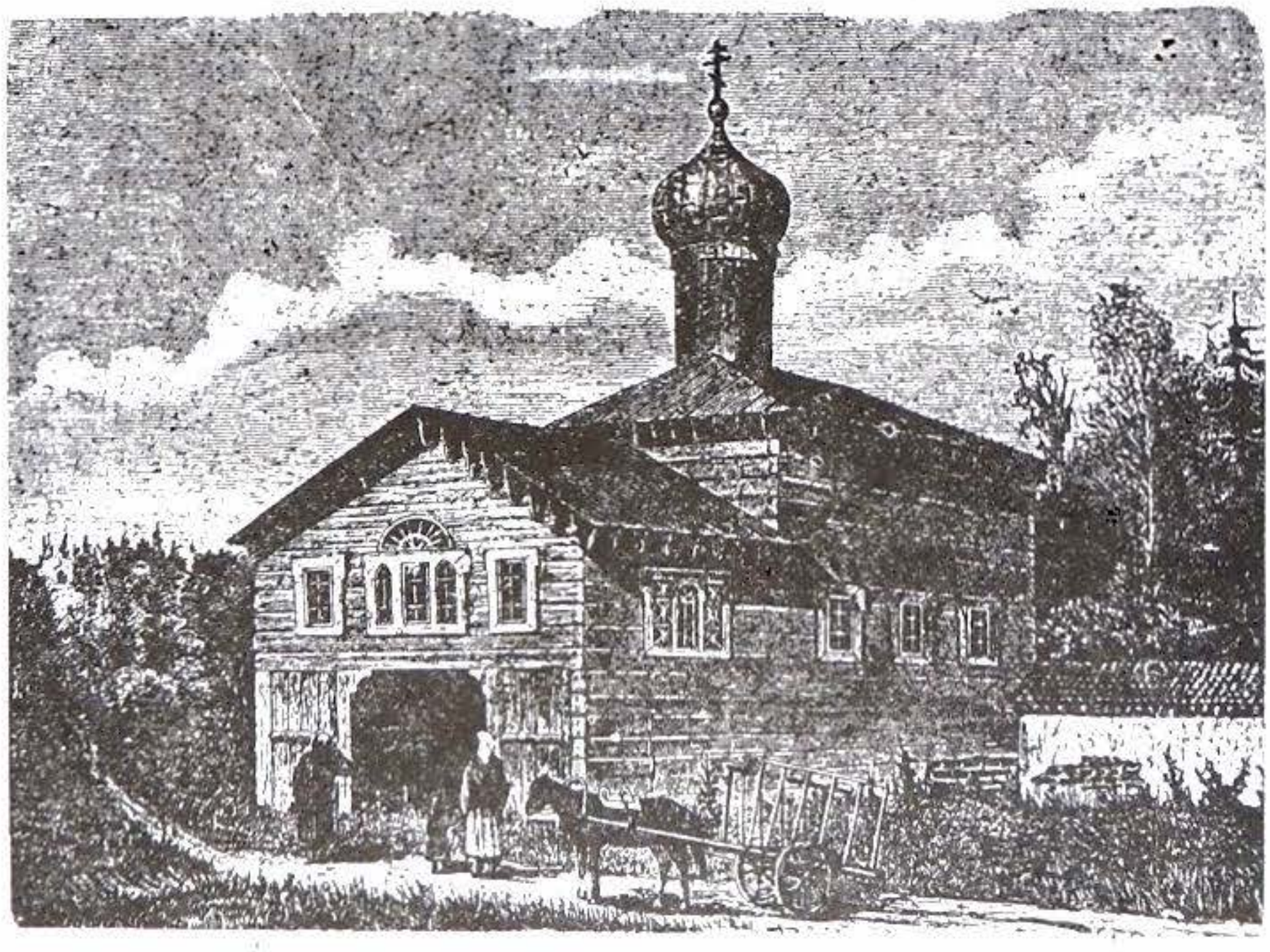
IT WAS to such a company that St. Dalmat was to join himself.

And so Demetrius Ivanovich Makrinsky, fortified by the Holy Mysteries of the Orthodox Church, grew strong in body and spirit, and in his virtuous life as a valiant cossack and fearless defender of the Orthodox Sovereign, became distinguished by some heroic deed, and for his faithful service to the Russian State he was rewarded with the rank of nobility. He was tall, handsome, and strong, rich and honored. He was happily married and had children, one of whom, his son, later joined his father as an ascetic and became his successor as abbot of his monastery.

And then suddenly, as his Life tells us, "he left his wife and children, and becoming inflamed with love for God and ascetic struggle, entered Neryansk Monastery in the nearby Ural Mountains."



Typical structures of a well-to-do monastery in Siberia

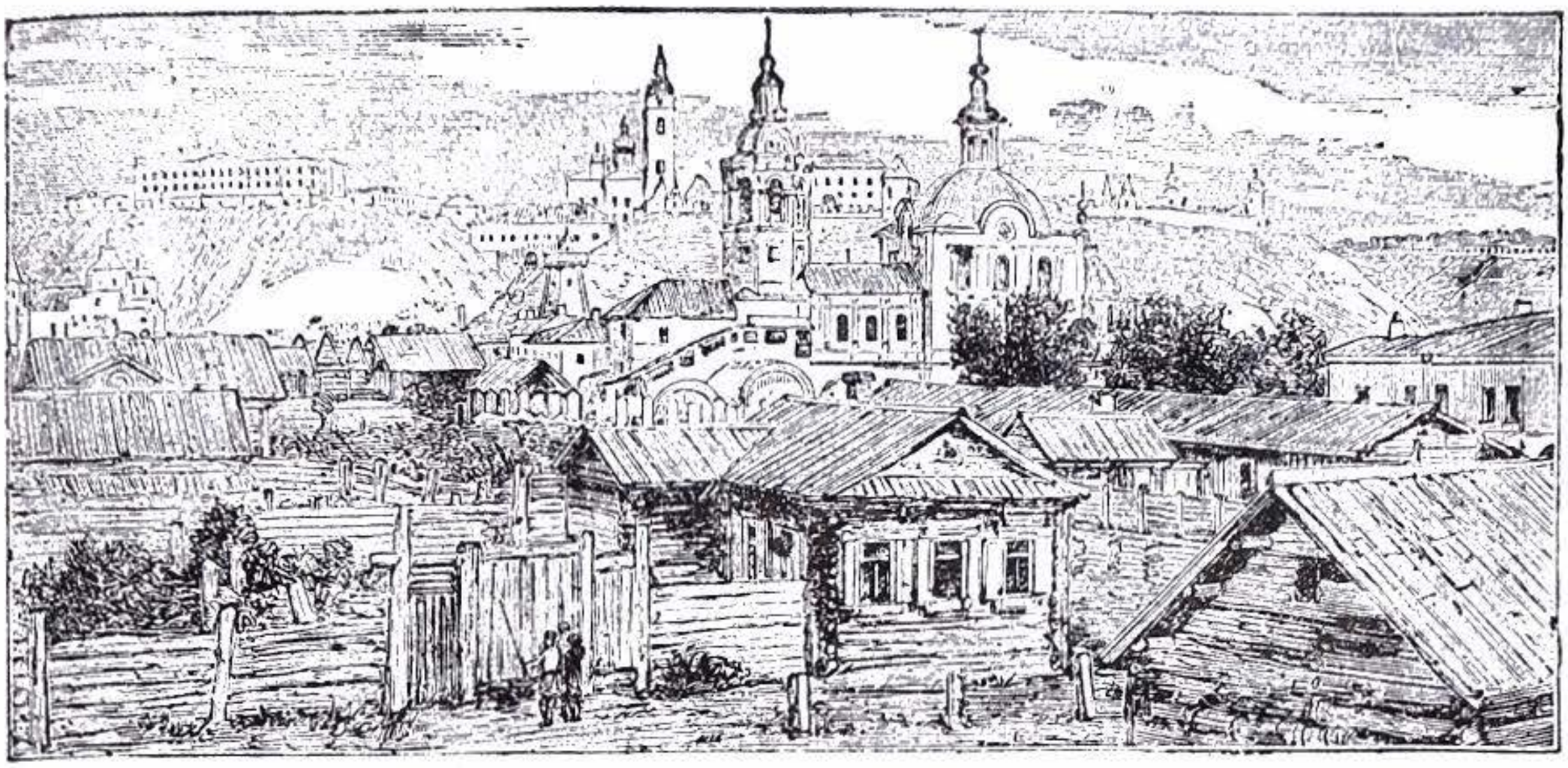


One of the original churches built by St. Tryphon of Vyatka

View of the city of Tobolsk from the Irtysh River

What the cause was for this abrupt change in his hitherto full and happy life, we do not know: God calls to His service in unfathomable ways. But one event took place about the same time in the city of Tobolsk which indeed could have caused many to stop in deep perplexity in order to reflect on the value of all our earthly endeavors in the face of the eternity which awaits us after death.

On the 14th of August, 1643, on the eve of the Feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God, a great fire broke out in Tobolsk, and almost the whole city burned to the ground. The fire destroyed the city fort,, all the government buildings, the cathedral and parish churches, the archbishop's residence, storehouses, the business district and countless other buildings and private homes. The fire lasted for several days and made people penniless overnight. Whether Demetrius himself lost everything in the fire, as thousands of others did, or whether, seeing the all-consuming fire, he made a thorough re-evaluation of his spiritual life, or even made a vow to dedicate his life to God — we do not know. What we do know is that the worldly hero decided at about this time to become a struggler for God. With deep devotion he took an icon precisely of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God, abandoning everything else and went into the uninhabited Ural Mountains — in order to die to the world.



The upper and lower towns of Tobolsk
In front: a typical merchant's house with courtyard

In the monastery the young struggler was tonsured with the name of Dalmat and given over to monastic obediences for the testing and refining of his ascetic fervor. The monastic ideal of the Northern Thebaid was taking root in Siberia at this time; books and tales of monasticism were spreading, aided by such powerful church figures as the Tobolsk hierarch Gerasim. And so the ascetic fervor could not but ignite the heart of the young monk Dalmat also. He rapidly progressed in the spiritual life and thirsted for the mental inward activity which was so characteristic of his patron, St. Demetrius of Priluki.

So outstanding was the monk Dalmat, both in his strict ascetic struggles and his virtuous life, that the brothers of the monastery elected him to be their abbot, even though he was still quite young. But the humble Dalmat, fleeing worldly glory and the responsibility for so many souls, fled the monastery, taking with him his cell-icon of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God, seeking a solitary place where he might please God by a life of silence and ascetic struggles.

Our holy Father found a place according to his desire on the bank of the river Iset, where the river Techa flows into it. Here, on a hill which from of old had borne the name of "White Town," he dug a cave for himself and began to live an anchoretic life. This was on land which belonged to the Tatar Prince Iligei.

TOBOLSK

The Heart of Orthodox Siberia

The upper and lower towns of Tobolsk after the fire of 1643

But this lamp of Orthodox monastic life, St.Dalmat, was not meant to be hid under a bushel, but to be placed upon a lampstand and shine for the salvation of others. And so it was that the rumor of the great ascetic soon spread among the inhabitants of this area, not only among the Christians, but also among those who had not yet been enlightened by Holy Baptism. Many of the Christians began to join him and share his life of monastic struggle, and from as far away as Nizhni-Novgorod on the Volga River in the west, a certain Elder, John, a disciple of the Elder Dorotheus, was granted a miraculous revelation concerning the labors of St. Dalmat, and he hastened into Siberia to join his community.

Many laymen also, both Christian and non-Christian, would come to visit the Saint and take delight in his sweet converse which was for their spiritual profit; those who were not yet Christians would leave him with an awareness of how far the Orthodox Faith surpassed their own pagan beliefs.

Thus was the beginning made, in the year 1644, for the monastery which later came to be called the "Dalmatian" monastery, after its holy founder. Soon the cave of St. Dalmat could no longer contain all the ascetics who desired to share his life, and the Saint asked the blessing of Archbishop of Tobolsk, Gerasimus Kremnev, to build a chapel with wooden walls. This was the first building of the new monastery, and in it was placed the wonder-working Icon of the Dormition which the Saint had brought with him when he first settled there.

NOT LONG, HOWEVER, was the young community to enjoy repose. The first enemies to appear were the Russian lease-holders Korolev and Shipitsyni, to whom Iligei had just leased the whole "White Town" with its surrounding area. Here they made a great income from fish, otters, and beavers, and for some reason they formed the idea that the ascetics who had settled there were dangerous rivals in this undertaking. Resorting to slander in order to remove their "rivals," they told the Prince that the Elder Dalmat had built a monastery there and intended to take away his whole estate. The Prince, enraged at the "brazenness" of the desert-dwellers, hastened to the cave of the Saint with bared sword. The Elder met the Prince with meekness and true Christian calmness and courage, and informed that they were related to each other, since the Saint's mother was descended from newly-baptized Siberian Tatars. The majestic appearance of the Saint, his extraordinary meekness calm, and the news of his kinship, immediately disposed Iligei favorably

towards the Saint. He placed his sword at the Saint's feet and departed in silence.

But the malice of the Saint's enemies did not cease and they continued to spread slanders about him to the Prince, extending even to the Saint's supposed secret desire to kill the Prince himself. Again the Prince believed the false accusations, and this time he resolved to punish the monks most cruelly. Therefore, with his army, composed chiefly of his fellow Moslems, he set out for "White Town." Nightfall found him on the opposite bank of the river from the monastery, and he decided to wait to cross the river in the morning. The destruction of the barely-established monastery seemed certain.

Soon the night bonfires were lit and, being reflected in the dark waters of the wide river, gave the scene an ominous character. The monks on the opposite shore could not but see the fires and hear the echoed shouting and singing and the vicious laughter of their enemies, who seemed to celebrate their victory in advance.

Having almost no means of self- defence, the monks turned for help in prayer to the Mother of God, their sure Protectress. And quick help was indeed rendered. That very night the Queen of Heaven appeared to Iligei in a dream. It was a majestic apparition: clad in royal purple, with a glittering crown above Her head, the Mother of God held a flaming sword, and in Her right hand a whip. Sternly She forbade the pagan prince to do any harm to St. Dalmat and his fellow-strugglers, commanding him to give this land to the Saint in perpetuity, together with all its rights.

Greatly shocked by this vision, Prince Iligei completely changed his intention, and in the morning he crossed the river with a few of his followers and told the Elder of the miraculous appearance to him of a Woman, Whom he called the Mother of God. From that time on Prince Iligei had a special respect for St. Dalmat, protecting him from enemies and giving him abundant gifts.

The following spring, when the lease on the land had expired, the Prince came with his whole family to the Saint's monastery, conducted the Saint over the whole extent of the property, and solemnly presented the land to the monastery, giving the Saint, in addition, as a sign of his respect, his own iron helmet and coat of mail, which was preserved up to this century in the monastery sepulchre. This occurred in the year 1646, which is considered the year of the monastery's foundation.

Winter snow flurries
over Blessed Gerasim's Ascension Monastery in Irkutsk, in the Baikal Lake territory, where St. Innocent (†1731) was later to shine forth in sanctity

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is acquired by many struggles and much suffering. And so, even after the Saint's deliverance from Iligei he did not enjoy repose for long. In the beginning of 1651 a wild horde of pagan Kalmyks attacked the monastery, burned the buildings, and killed with the sword or took into captivity all the monks. St. Dalmat alone was miraculously preserved from fire and death. The monastery was completely destroyed, except for the wonder-working Icon of the Dormition, which miraculously remained through the looting and the fire, only one corner of it being slightly scorched where the brazen hand of one of the pagans had touched it.

Resolved to work out his salvation in patience and long-suffering, St. Dalmat returned to the site of his monastery and began to restore it from its foundations. Thanks to his fervor and his labors, within a few years a wooden

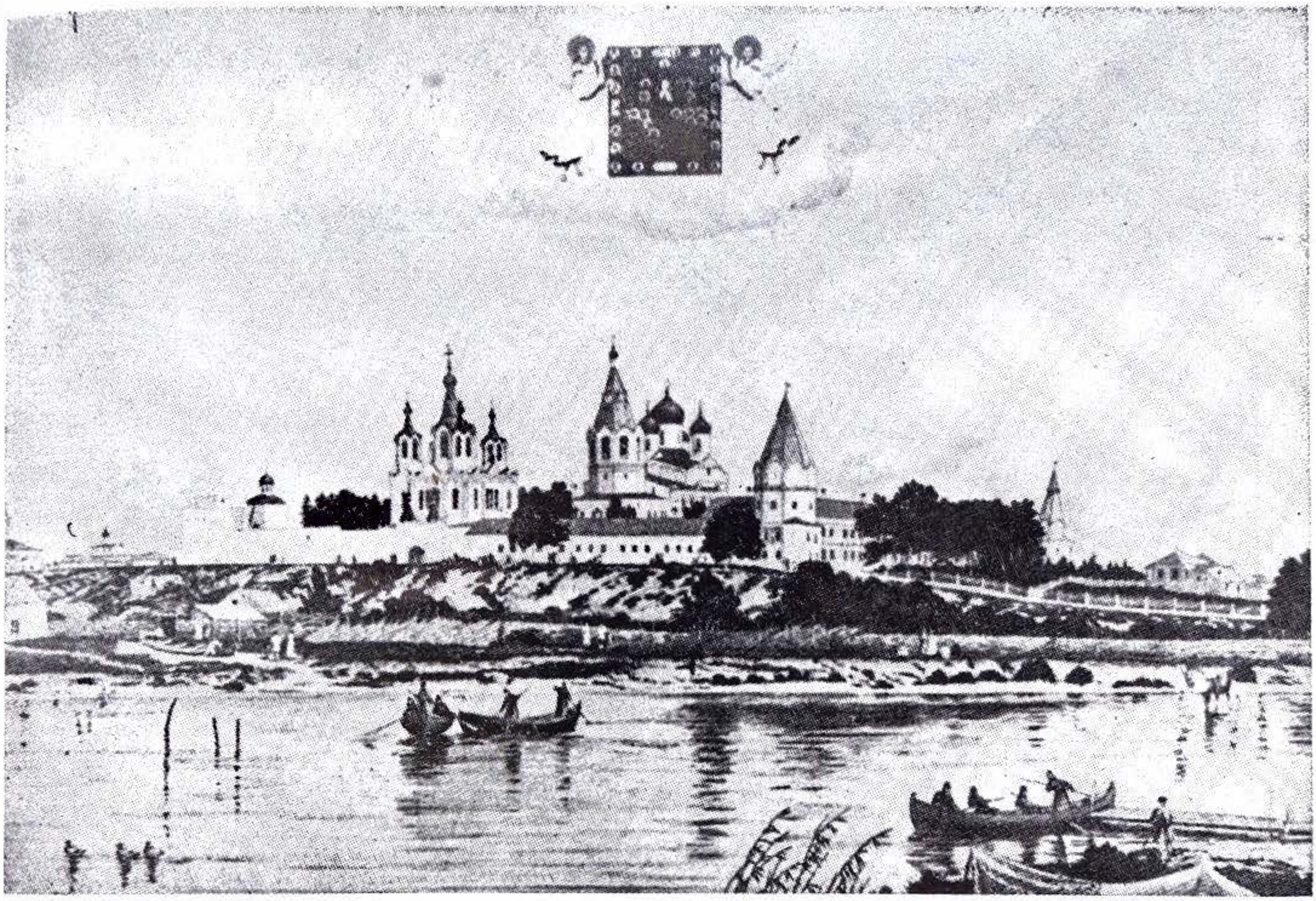
church and several wooden cells had been built, and again monks and pilgrims flocked to the holy Elder from near and far, begging his counsel and aiding the monastery with their gifts.

Later the monastery was again subjected to the attacks of wild Siberian tribes, and several times was laid waste, until the pious Tsar Theodore Alexeevich caused it to be surrounded with a wall and fortified, in 1682. Here the Saint finished the course of his much-suffering life in peace in the year 1697, being buried within the monastery walls.

After the Saint's repose, his own son, Archimandrite Isaac, was abbot in his monastery. It was he who, in 1717, built the stone church which remained until this century, dedicated to the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God, with wings dedicated to St. John the Theologian and — a sign of the kinship of St. Dalmat with the main monastic current further west in Russia — St. Demetrius of Priluki, the contemporary and fellow-converser with St. Sergius of Radonezh. Later in the monastery there was a small home-church dedicated to Sts. Sergius and Nikon of Radonezh. Until the Revolution the "Dalmatian" monastery, beautifully situated on the hill of "White Town," although it was never large (with 60 monks in 1908), was a leading place of pilgrimage for the pious Orthodox faithful, who were drawn both by the holy memory of St. Dalmat, and by the wonder-working Icon treasured in the main stone church, whose feast days on February 15 and August 15 attracted a great multitude of pilgrims.

A chapel was built over the grave of St. Dalmat, and in it were kept his monastic cowl and mantle and his portrait (which is presented here in the beginning of this Life). Up to the present century services were held there almost daily, and a book was kept which recorded the many miracles which occurred by his prayers.

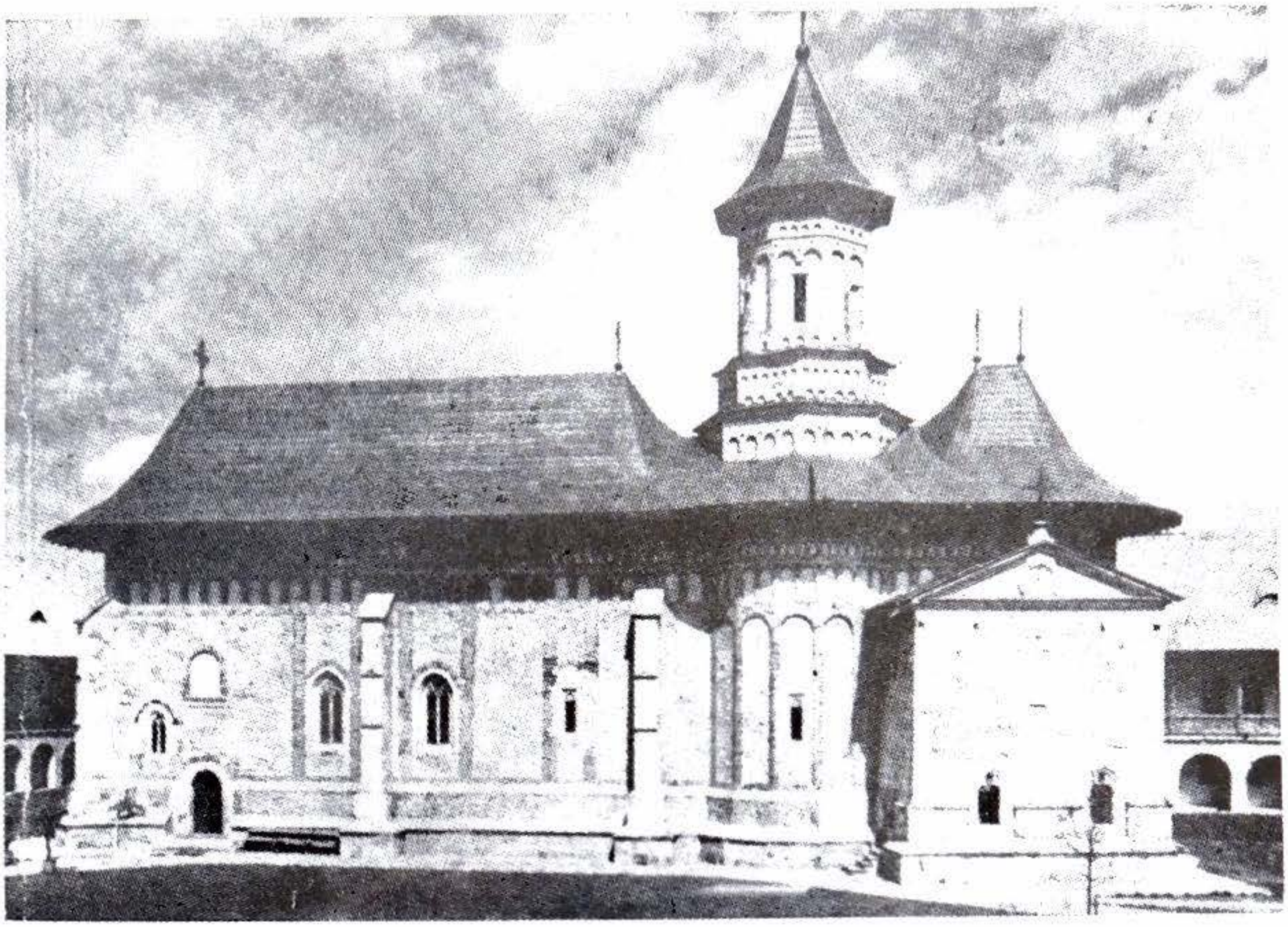
And thus even the last frontier of open space in the vast Russian land came to know the monastic tradition of St. Sergius, in the person of the holy Elder Dalmatus, who even under the attack of barbarian tribes kept alive the flame of true monasticism and sanctity in a final blossoming of the Northern Thebaid in the wild Siberian land.



ST. DALMATUS' DORMITION MONASTERY

as it looked at its flourishing peak at the end of Imperial Russia

From a painting preserved at the monastery



Main Church of the Ascension in Niamets Monastery
In the annex on the far right (with two windows),
Blessed Paisius' body is buried

St. Theodore the Studite
11th-century mosaic on Chios

St. Maximus
the Confessor
14th-century Mt. Athos fresco

GREAT TEACHERS OF HESYCHASM AND THE PRAYER OF JESUS

The Life and Ascetic Labors of Our Father, Elder Paisius, Archimandrite of the Holy Moldavian Monasteries of Niamets and Sekoul. Part Fifteen

THE LETTERS OF ELDER PAISIUS FROM NIAMETS

1. A New Defense of the Prayer of Jesus*

In the summer of 1793 *a complaint was made to the Superior of the Moldavian monastery of Polyana-Vorona, Schema-hieromonk Agathon, signed by thirteen monks and all the brethren of the monastery, against Hieromonk Theopemptus of this monastery, who was blaspheming the Patristic books which teach about the mental Prayer of Jesus and was calling those who read these books heretics and quacks. These books, according to those making the complaint, had been obtained by them from the monastery of Elder Paisius. The complainants demanded that Theopemptus should prove, in the full assembly of the brethren, that they were heretics. All the monks gathered in church and called Theopemptus, but he did not come. Then they went to his cell and asked why he was calling them heretics. Theopemptus replied: "All the books which you are reading are fantasies, and you are all deceived." The holy Prayer of Jesus he called a heresy and said that this heresy had come out of the Moshensk mountains and from there had come to Elder Paisius already about thirty years earlier. After this, the Niamets spiritual father Hyacinth came to the monastery of Polyana-Vorona and, at the request of the brethren, exhorted Theopemptus: but the latter gave him the same reply which he had already given the brethren. Then it was decided to make a complaint to Elder Paisius, with an exposition of all the circumstances of the matter. The complaint was received by the Elder on June* 19, 1793.

*Thirty years before this, to be sure, Elder Paisius, while still in Dragomirna, had written a work on the Prayer of Jesus**; but it was not a praise of the heresy which had appeared then among the monks of the Moshensk moun-*

* This entire section is from Chetverikov, II, pp. 50-52.

** English translation in *The Orthodox Word*, beginning with no. 6, 1972.

tains, but a refutation of it. He showed the sanctity and correctness of the Prayer of Jesus, with citations of numerous testimonies of the Holy Fathers. And now he again stepped out with a written defense of mental prayer, in the form of a letter to the monks of the monastery of Polyana-Vorona. His earlier proofs he now supplemented with new ones taken from Patristic books. Here we shall quote the final portion of this letter of Elder Paisius:

I beg and entreat you with my whole soul to have undoubting faith in the Patristic books and the teaching contained in them, for it is in all respects in agreement with the Divine Scripture and with the mind of all the ecumenical teachers and the entire Holy Church, because it is one and the same Holy Spirit that is active in them. The teaching to be found in the Patristic books is the true instruction for monks who desire to be saved, and do you, keeping to it, flee and remove yourselves from the blasphemies of the one who has appeared among you blaspheming the holy books of our God-bearing Fathers. For neither he nor the others like him can present a single holy witness of their evil-wisdom and their blasphemies, but they place all their foundation solely upon the sand of their own corrupt and ungodly understanding, being instigated by the father of lies, the devil.

But you, loyal and true sons of the Orthodox Church, are set firm on the immovable rock of faith; for you have a great multitude of witnesses to the true doing of the commandments of God and to this sacred prayer in our holy and God-bearing Fathers, a list of whom I present to you with this letter. Follow their holy teaching, force yourselves with soul and body to every good and God-pleasing work as much as possible, with the cooperation of the grace of God. But with this blasphemer, if he shall not wish to repent, I entreat and beg you, have no contact whatever. If possible, remove him from yourselves with love, so that your life might be quiet and peaceful, without any disturbance, to the glory of God and to the salvation of your souls, which I most fervently desire for you.

2. To a Uniate Priest, on the Procession of the Holy Spirit*

A certain Uniate priest by the name of John came to doubt the truth of his confession and appealed to Elder Paisius with the entreaty that he clear up his perplexity. The main part of the Elder's reply is given here:

The Holy Spirit Himself, Who proceeds from the Father and reposes in the Son, has inspired you by His grace to appeal with this question to a humble and sinful, but Orthodox, son of the Eastern Church...

*** This entire section is from Chetverikov, II, pp. 55-57.**

BLESSED PAISIUS VELICHKOVSKY

The first and most important error of the Uniates is the teaching, which they have taken from the Romans, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son [Filioque]. This is the first and most important of all the heresies, for it includes in itself an incorrect judgment, contrary to the Sacred Scripture, about God, Who is One in the Holy Trinity. He who confesses that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son supposes in God two principles: one of the Father, another of the Son. But we Orthodox confess in the Trinity one principle of the Father, as our Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught us in the holy Gospel, when He said that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone. He said: *When the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, Who proceedeth from the Father* (John 15:26). And the Apostle says: *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming from the Father of lights* (James 1:17). Do you see? He says "the Father of lights"; that is, the Father is the root and fount of Divinity; and the two lights, the Son and the Spirit from the single light, the Father, have their pre-eternal being, the Son in being begotten and the Holy Spirit in procession.

The Divine Prophet David says: *By the word of the Lord were the heavens established, and all the might of them by the Spirit of His mouth* (Psalm 32:6). Do you see? He calls the Father Lord, but he calls the Son Word, as pre-eternally begotten of Him; and he calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of His (and not "Their") lips, as proceeding from the Father alone. One could search out many other testimonies also from the Old and New Testaments, which show more clearly than the sun that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone and reposes in the Son, as was disclosed also in the Baptism of the Lord.

Further, all the holy ecumenical teachers who have interpreted the Scripture as if with one mouth say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, and nowhere have they written that He proceeds from the Son also. Thus, if the Uniates think exactly like the Romans in such a serious heresy, what hope do they have for salvation, unless they openly renounce this Spirit-fighting heresy and become united again with the Holy Orthodox Eastern Church?

Spare neither property nor relatives if they do not wish to listen to you, but by all means save your own soul from perdition; because there is nothing more needful for you than the soul for which Christ died. But in fleeing, do not look back in your heart for the sake of swiftly-perishing possessions; it is better for you to remain in poverty than to blaspheme the Holy Spirit as the

(*Continued on page* 210)

(*Continued from page* 183)

Several years after the death of St. Martin, Sulpicius Severus composed two (sometimes divided into three) "Dialogues" on St. Martin.* This work, again, is greatly criticized by rationalist scholars, not merely for its miracles, but even more for its "anecdotal" character. One critic writes of it that by it "Sulpicius fixed for centuries a hagiographical tradition that rates the anecdotes of wonderworking above spiritual portraiture" (Hoare, *The Western Fathers,* p. 7). For Orthodox Christians precisely this "anecdotal" character is a source of immediate delight and makes the *Dialogues* of Sulpicius very close in spirit to the *Prologue.* Rationalist scholars are offended by these "anecdotes" because *they have lost the whole picture* into which these fragments fit. Orthodox Christians by no means see in such "anecdotes" the essence of a saint's life and character; but of course we take delight in the miracles of our saints and do not weary of them, knowing that in these *true stories* we can already see the breaking into this world of the entirely different laws of the spiritual, heavenly world, which at the end of time will entirely triumph over the laws of this fallen world. For us every "anecdote" that breathes the spirit of true Christianity in practice is a part of that one *Christian life,* the model for our own feeble struggle for salvation.

The *Dialogues* of Sulpicius are still somewhat "sophisticated" and therefore not as offensive to rationalist critics as later Orthodox works in the West. Sulpicius was trying to communicate to the educated Romans of his day the wonders of the new Christian life and frequently has in mind the weakness of his readers — whether their difficulty in believing some of his accounts, or their incapacity to fast like the ascetics of the East. Later, the materials for the Orthodox "Prologue" in the West become more "childlike" — not, primarily, because the level of education has decreased, but because Christianity has entered more deeply into the heart of the men of the West. Let us follow this development to see if we ourselves can learn from this childlikeness.

2. THE *DIALOGUES* OF ST. GREGORY THE GREAT (543-604)

The *Dialogues* of Sulpicius (400 A.D.) are an apologetic and missionary work, intended to convince men of the truth and power of Christianity, its saints, its miracles, its monastic life. The *Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great,

§ English translation, together with the Life of St. Martin and Sulpicius' Letters about the Saint, in Hoare, *The Western Fathers.*

Pope of Rome, two centuries later (593) are a recalling to spiritual life in a West already Christianized. St. Gregory's situation, then, is also that of us today; for all but the freshest convert have experienced the waning of Christian zeal and the awareness of the need to renourish one's spiritual faculties.

The holy hierarch begins his *Dialogues* in a melancholy frame of mind: "My unhappy soul, weighed down by worldly affairs, calls now to mind in what state it was when I lived in my monastery, and how then it was superior to all earthly matters, far above everything transitory and corruptible, how it did usually think upon nothing but heavenly things." He is further saddened—but also inspired and roused to zeal — "by remembering the lives of certain notable men, who with their whole soul did utterly forsake and abandon this evil world... very many of whom, in a contemplative and retired kind of life, greatly pleased God." He proceeds to "report only those things which I myself have understood by the relation of virtuous and credible persons, or else learned by myself, concerning the life and miracles of perfect and holy men." Thus, the *Dialogues* too are one of those *original sources* so important for Orthodox Christians. There follow the four books of the *Dialogues,* which are so much in the genuine Orthodox spirit that it is no wonder that they later became one of the chief sources for the incidents of the *Prologue* in the East, being very early translated into Greek, and earned for St. Gregory the name by which he is known to this day in the Orthodox Church: THE DIALOGIST.

Two of the books are devoted to the saints of Italy who lived before St. Gregory — sometimes their Lives, but more often just incidents from their lives which are capable of arousing piety and zeal. The Second Book, however, is devoted entirely to one saint who inspired St. Gregory in Italy much as St. Martin inspired Sulpicius in Gaul: St. Benedict (†543), a great Holy Father of Western monasticism. This Book constitutes the earliest Life of this great Orthodox saint, who has long had his place —just like St. Gregory himself (March 12) — in the Orthodox Calendars of the East (March 14).

The first three books of the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory are, quite frankly, "miracle stories," and the great hierarch makes no apology for handing them down: these are the material of Christian hope and inspiration, and so deeply had the West become Orthodox at this time that it received them eagerly. But the Fourth Book of the *Dialogues* is the crowning insult to the modern rationalist: these he would surely dismiss as "ghost stories." The Fourth Book contains accounts — just as true and trustworthy as the "miracle stories" — which demonstrate the truth of life after death. There are profitable tales of

the departure of men's souls, the state of souls in heaven and hell, the return of souls to their bodies after death, various apparitions of souls after death, and the like. Very similar tales may be found in a superb Orthodox book in England over a century later: the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* by Venerable Bede (Book V, chapters 12-14).

It must be said that the graduates of the modernist Orthodox seminaries, and "sophisticated" Orthodox today in general, find this part of ancient Christian literature the most difficult to accept. A few years ago a book of similar inspiration appeared in English: *Eternal Mysteries Beyond the Grave,* subtitled "Orthodox Teachings on the Existence of God, the Immortality of the soul, and Life Beyond the Grave" (Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, N. Y., 1968). This work, the fruit of the missionary fervor of Archimandrite Panteleimon of Jordanville, consists of excerpts from the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory, the *Lives of Saints,* and similar standard Orthodox works, as well as Russian religious books and periodicals of the 19th century which give more recent incidents in the same spirit, together with excellent introductions to these excerpts, simple and straightforward and with just the right moral and pious tone so lacking in most Orthodox writings today. The book, while not an original source like St. Gregory's *Dialogues,* is of great value for Orthodox Christians. Anyone who has tried to interest children in Orthodox reading is well aware that this book, as perhaps no other book that now exists in English, is absolutely fascinating to children; a child of ten or twelve, if he first hears some of the profitable tales in it being read aloud at a family gathering, will later quite likely take the book himself and literally devour it, so interesting is it — not merely because the tales are "exciting" and quite capable of competing with the banal ghost stories of our day, but even more because he knows that *these stories are true and teach the truths of our Orthodox Faith.* How much energy "Orthodox educators" waste trying to arouse the interest of children in such inappropriate and soul-corrupting materials as cartoons and coloring books — while such a genuinely fascinating and authentic Orthodox book they overlook or disdain. Why is this? The answer to this question may clear away some of the difficulties that stand in the way of making maximum use of genuine Orthodox literature today.

In the 19th century Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, a great Orthodox Father of recent times, faced a similar problem when he tried to teach the Orthodox doctrine of heaven and hell, good and evil spirits, and life after death, to the Orthodox people of his time. Many "sophisticated" Christians objected, precisely because their own ideas of these realities were based

on Roman Catholic and Protestant, not Orthodox, ideas; and so Bishop Ignatius devoted one entire volume of his collected works (v. 3) to this question, giving both the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic teaching. He found that the Orthodox doctrine on all these questions — even though it does not, of course, tell us everything about them — is quite precise in what it teaches, based on Patristic writings such as the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory; while Roman Catholicism, under the influence especially of modern philosophy from Descartes onwards, has come to teach a doctrine in which spiritual realities become increasingly vague, corresponding to the ever greater preoccupation of modern men with material things. Most Orthodox Christians today have picked up this modernist-Papist teaching "in the air" of the contemporary world, and therefore if we do not consciously strive to discover the truth, we will be embarrassed when presented with the Orthodox teaching which is so definite, especially about the experiences of the soul after death. If we believe this teaching, after all, we shall certainly be considered "naive" and "simple" even by other believers, let alone by unbelievers. Some in their embarrassment may come to think that these Orthodox teachings, which are so foreign to what "everybody thinks" nowadays, are themselves somehow suspect, and they can point to Roman Catholics who claim that the Fourth Book of St. Gregory's *Dialogues* teaches the Latin doctrine of Purgatory. Fortunately, however, this accusation has already been raised and answered for us. Roman Catholic scholars proclaimed this very thing at the false council of Florence in 1439, and St. Mark of Ephesus, the champion of Orthodoxy, gave the authoritative Orthodox answer: the teaching of St. Gregory in his *Dialogues* is Orthodox, and in fact he clearly teaches *against* Purgatory.*

The *Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great, as well as *Eternal Mysteries Beyond the Grave*, is excellent medicine for today's over-sophisticated Orthodox Christians. They can be a touchstone for us: if, reading them, we find them "naive," "too realistic," or otherwise distasteful, we can know that we are still too "sophisticated," not childlike and simple enough in our Orthodoxy. If we are converts, we can know that we have not yet entered enough into the genuine spirit of Orthodoxy; if we are "native Orthodox," we can know that our Orthodoxy has been corrupted by false modern Roman Catholic ideas. We will have to struggle harder to approach such basic Orthodox literature like children, without all our supposed "wisdom." Those who are accustomed to reading the Orthodox literature of Christian antiquity have no difficulty with such books.

§ St. Mark of Ephesus, "First Homily on Purgatorial Fire (Refutation of the Latin Chapters)," ch. 9; "Second Homily on Purgatorial Fire," ch. 23:9.

3. THE *BOOKS OF MIRACLES* OF ST. GREGORY OF TOURS

No writer in Latin in the Orthodox West was more devoted to the saints of Christ's Church nor more prolific in his praises of them than St. Gregory, Bishop of Tours (538-593). Although he is chiefly known today for his *History of the Franks*, he is more important to Orthodox Christians for his eight *Books of Miracles*, which are usually called his "minor works." In this 6th-century writer of Gaul there breathes the very spirit of the Orthodox East and the *Prologue*. Being especially under the influence of St. Martin, his own predecessor in the See of Tours, from whom he received miraculous healings, he devoted four of the eight books of this work to *The Miracles* (or rather, *Virtues*) *of Blessed Martin the Bishop*. But he also took all the saints as his concern, writing one book on *The Glory of the Blessed Martyrs*, another on *The Passion and Miracles of St. Julian the Martyr*, another on *The Life of the Fathers*, and a final one on *The Glory of the Confessors*. Taken together, these books — which deal mostly with the saints of Gaul — constitute the largest hagiographical material on the Orthodox saints of any land in antiquity. His aim in writing is moral and didactic, and he consciously turns his back on pagan learning. He himself writes: "We ought to pursue, to write, to speak that which edifies the Church of God and by sacred teaching enriches needy minds by the knowledge of perfect faith. For we ought not to recall the lying stories, or to follow the wisdom of the philosophers which is hostile to God, lest we fall under the judgment of eternal death by the decision of the Lord... I do not recall in my work the flight of Saturn, the wrath of Juno, the adulteries of Jupiter... Having glanced at all these events built on sand and soon to perish, we return rather to divine and evangelical miracles" (*The Glory of the Blessed Martyrs*, Preface).

"Miracles," indeed, are the subject matter as well as the title of these books. If rationalistic scholars are offended at the many miracles in the *History of the Franks*, they are absolutely scandalized by the *Books of Miracles*, which abound in them. But the reason why he writes of them, again, is because they are *true*, and he is careful to point out that he writes only what he knows from personal experience (having known many of the saints himself and witnessed many miracles) or from the testimony of reliable people. Thus, these books also are invaluable *original sources* of Christianity in practice.

Although St. Gregory is known in the East and mentioned in Orthodox Patrologies,* his writings were not translated into Greek or Slavonic. His con-

§ For example, in the Patrology of Archbishop Philaret of Chernigov, St. Petersburg 1882, vol. 3, section 191.

cern was too much with the West, and the East already had numerous collections on Eastern saints in exactly the same spirit.** More surprising, however, is it that the *Books of Miracles* (save for a few excerpts) has never been translated into English. This can only be a testimony to the rationalist superstition that has prevailed in the West in modern times, and also to the dying out of interest in the Orthodox saints of the West which has been continuing for many centuries now. Another reason why he has been disdained in the West is that his language falls short of the standards of classical Latin. He himself recognizes this and states that he undertook his *Books of Miracles* only at the command of the Lord in visions. In one dream, when protesting to his mother his lack of skill in writing, he received from her this answer: "Do you not know that on account of the ignorance of our people the way you can speak is considered more intelligible? So do not hesitate or delay doing this, because it will be a charge against you if you pass over these deeds in silence" (*The Miracles of Blessed Martin the Bishop,* Preface to the First Book). Even Blessed Augustine, as is well known, was reproached for his shortcomings in classical Latin, and he gave a sufficient reply, which will do for an answer to the detractors of St. Gregory's Latin also: "It is better that the grammarians reproach us than that the people not understand us."

Archbishop John Maximovitch of blessed memory gave as his testament to the Orthodox Christians of the West his love for the saints of Western lands. In fulfillment of this testament we now offer, as a separate book, the first English translation of the whole of the seventh of St. Gregory's *Books of Miracles* — THE LIFE OF THE FATHERS. No apology is necessary for presenting these twenty chapters on the monastic saints of Gaul in the 5th and 6th centuries. For the Orthodox Christian they are fascinating reading; the edifying homily that precedes each Life is most instructive for our spiritual struggle today; the spirit of the book is entirely Orthodox, and the Orthodox practices described in it have remained the inheritance of Orthodox Christians (but not of Roman Catholics) today, including the veneration of the "icons of saints" (the Latin text has *iconicas* instead of the more to be expected *imagines*) in chapter 12; and some of the incidents, just like the stories of the desert Fathers, have precise relevance for our problems today — for example, the story of the "charismatic" deacon who "healed in the name of Jesus" until St. Friardus exposed him as being in satanic deception (ch. 10).

§§ One of them, *The History of the Lovers of God* by Blessed Theodoret (5th century) — a collection of Lives of the Syrian Fathers — is an exact parallel to St. Gregory's *Life of the Fathers.*

THE ORTHODOX WORD

It is our heartfelt wish that this book will take its place, together with the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great, the *Lausiac History* of Palladius, and other BASIC ORTHODOX SOURCE-BOOKS, as part of the daily reading of those who are struggling for their salvation on the narrow Orthodox path. May it be read silently; may it be read aloud; may it become, like the other great books of Christian antiquity, a source of piety and the true spirit of Orthodoxy which is everywhere being overpowered today by the spirit of the world. May it help us in the all-important struggle to become and remain *conscious Orthodox Christians,* knowing what is the path of salvation, what is the savor of true Christianity, and how far we all fall short of these. May it be for us a beginning, a prologue, of true Christianity in practice!

BLESSED PAISIUS VELICHKOVSKY

(*Continued from page* 203)

Romans blaspheme Him. Depart and flee from the Unia as speedily as possible, lest death overtake you in it and you be numbered among the heretics and not among the Christians. And not only go away yourself, but advise others to go away also, if in your conscience you know that they will hear you. And if they will not hear you, then at least depart yourself from the nets of the enemy and be united in soul and heart with the Holy Orthodox Church, and thus, together with all [the faithful] holding the inviolate faith and fulfilling the commandments of Christ, you will be able to be saved.

Next: The Letter of Elder Paisius to Maria Protasieva, on the Monastic Life.

ALSO TO BE NOTED:

The *Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great: A moderately-priced reprint of this work will be undertaken if enough interest is shown. Inquire from the publishers: Eastern Orthodox Books, P.O. Box 302, Willits, Calif., 95490.

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